

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 00988 041302Z

41

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9549

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO CINCSO

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 0988

NOFORN

SECDEF FOR DIA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, PINT, BL, PINS

SUBJ: MILITARY ATTITUDE ON CURRENT SEA OUTLET NEGOTIATIONS

1. ON JANUARY 28, THE EMBASSY DEFENSE ATTACHE AND THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR HAD A PRIVATE LUNCHEON WITH GENERAL JUAN AYOROA AYOROA, UNTIL RECENTLY THE COMMANDER OF THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL IN COCHABAMBA. THE MEETING WAS ARRANGED AT GENERAL AYOROA'S REQUEST AND LASTED FOR OVER THREE HOURS.

2. THE GENERAL WANTED TO TELL US THAT HE HAD BEEN FIRED FROM HIS JOB AT THE SCHOOL AND PUT ON THE RETIREMENT LIST BECUASE HE HAD SENT A LETTER TO THE ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND CRITICAL OF THE HANDLING BY PRESIDENT BANZER OF THE OUTLET-TO-THE-SEA ISSUE. SPECIFICALLY, AYOROA WAS UPSET WITH THE WAY IN WHICH BANZER WAS EXPOSING THE BOLIVIAN ARMED FORCES BY, IN EFFECT, MAKING THEM APPEAR TO BE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PARAMETERS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, AND EVENTUALLY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LA PAZ 00988 041302Z

RESPONSIBLE FOR WHATEVER SETTLEMENT MAY BE OBTAINED.

3. ACCORDING TO AYOROA, BANZER IS LYING WHEN HE CLAIMS TO HAVE ARMED FORCES SUPPORT FOR HIS INITIATIVES ON THIS ISSUE. IN FACT, SAID AYOROA EXCEPT FOR A HANDFUL OF TOP BRASS, THERE IS WIDESPREAD DOUBT AND CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION TO BANZER'S HANDLING OF THE MATTER. DURING BANZER'S LATEST TOUR OF MILITARY UNITS TO EXPLAIN HIS POSITION AND ENLIST SUPPORT, HE FOUND SKEPTICISM IN COCHABAMBA AND THEREAFTER DECIDED NOT TO ASK FOR OPINIONS. NEVERTHELESS, UPON HIS RETURN TO LA PAZ, HE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD OBTAINED UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FROM THE OFFICER CORPS.

4. AYOROA ALSO IS CONCERNED THAT THE BEST SETTLEMENT WHICH BOLIVIA COULD OBTAIN WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT NOT BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF BOLIVIA. THIS WOULD MEAN THAT APPROVAL OF AN EVENTUAL AGREEMENT BY A DE FACTO GOB, DOMINATED BY THE MILITARY, WOULD NOT ONLY BE QUESTIONABLE LEGALLY, BUT WOULD BE HELD AGAINST THE MILITARY AS AN INSTITUTION. HE BELIEVES, THEREFORE, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION MUST PURSUE TWO COURSES: 1) FORM A BROADLY BASED POLITICAL MOVEMENT TO DEBATE, DECIDE AND GUIDE THE BOLIVIAN POSITION IN NEGOTIATIONS; 2) CONSTITUTIONALIZE THE COUNTRY THROUGH EARLY ELECTIONS SO THAT EVENTUAL AGREEMENT CAN BE RATIFIED OR REJECTED BY A GOVERNMENT WITH THE BACKING OF PUBLIC OPINION AND WITH DUE PROCESS OF LAW.

5. CLAIMING TO BE A 100 PERCENT INSTITUTIONALIST, AYOROA IS CONVINCED THAT BANZER HAS FROM THE OUTSET STIMULATED THE NEGOTIATIONS ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF REMAINING IN OFFICE, I.E. TO SERVE PERSONAL ENDS, NOT THOSE OF THE COUNTRY, AND TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE MILITARY AS AN INSTITUTION. HE FEELS THAT BANZER'S CHANGING FROM DAY TO DAY AS TO WHAT BOLIVIA IS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE DOES NOT REFLECT WHAT SOMEONE WHO HAS THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY WILL DO BUT RATHER WHAT SOMEONE WHO IS USING THE ISSUE FOR PERSONAL

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LA PAZ 00988 041302Z

GAIN WOULD DO TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF STAYING IN POWER. AYOROA BELIEVES THAT THE MILITARY INSTITUTION IS OF NO USE TO THE COUNTRY IF IT IS THERE ONLY TO SERVE THE POLITICAL AMBITIONS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP AND THAT IT SHOULD RESIST THIS TENDENCY IN BOLIVIA.

6. COMMENT: GENERAL AYOROA IS WIDELY REPUTED TO BE

AMONG THE MOST CAPABLE AND INTELLIGENT OFFICERS IN THE BOLIVIAN ARMED FORCES. HE BELIEVES IN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, HE SAYS, BUT ALSO BELIEVES IT IS THE DUTY OF THE MILITARY TO INTERVENE THE GOVERNMENT IF THE LATTER "GOES ASTRAY". HE AND TWO OF HIS MORE PROMINENT COUSINS (MIGUEL AYOROA A. AND JOSE PATINO AYOROA) ARE OFTEN LINKED TO COUP PLOTTING AND OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES, THE LATES BEING A SPATE OF RUMORS INVOLVING JUAN AYOROA'S DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITH BANZER OVER ACCESS TO THE SEA AND THE DE FACTO NATURE OF THE CURRENT REGIME. AS AN ASIDE, COL. AYOROA WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM ATTACHE (IN THIS CASE A EUPHEMISM FOR EXILE) DUTY IN SPAIN IN EARLY 1975, PROMOTED TO BGEN IN AUGUST 75, GIVEN THE JOB AS COMMANDER OF THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL AND SUBSEQUENTLY FIRED IN JANUARY 76. WE WERE INFORMED BY A REPUTABLE SOURCE THAT BGEN AYOROA WAS PERSONALLY DRESSED-DOWN BY PRESIDENT BANZER AT COCHABAMBA IN THE SEP-OCT76 TIME FRAME FOR POLITICAL MANEUVERING AT THE C&GSC. AYOROA'S MOTIVATION TO CONTACT US MAY HAVE BEEN TO DISCREDIT THE PRESIDENT. IN ADDITION, WE FEEL HE MAY HAVE WANTED US TO KNOW HIM PERSONALLY, AND TO HAVE HIS VIEWS AND HIS "FACTS" IN CASE HE SHOULD BE EXILED ON TRUMPED-UP CHARGES OR IN CASE HE SHOULD BE SUCCESSFUL IN A COUP ATTEMPT. THE U.S. MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK INFORMATION CONCERNING THE ATTITUDE OF MILITARY OFFICERS TO PRESIDENT BANZER'S HANDLING OF THE OUTLET-TO-THE-SEA ISSUE. AT THIS STAGE, WE CONCLUDE THAT A MINORITY OF ARMED FORCES OFFICERS ARE GENUINELY CONCERNED WITH BANZER'S APPROACH TO THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT ENJOYS THE ACQUIESCENCE, IF NOT THE ACTIVE SUPPORT, OF THE MAJORITY OF OFFICERS. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 LA PAZ 00988 041302Z

IT IS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT THE MILITARY IN GENERAL WILL NOT BLINDLY FOLLOW BANZER'S LEAD, OR ACCEPT HIS DECISIONS ON SUCH A VITAL ISSUE WITHOUT QUESTION. THEREFORE, IF BANZER IN FACT IGNORES THE INQUIETUDES OF THE MIDDLE-LEVEL MILITARY OFFICERS (AS CHARGED BY AYOROA) AND DOES NOT TRY TO CONVINCE THEM OF THE WISDOM OF HIS APPROACHES, A DANGEROUS OPPOSITION COULD DEVELOP WITHIN MILITARY RANKS TO HIS LEADERSHIP. STEDMAN

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